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Performance of UN Military Observer Teams: Does Victim Proximity Escalate Commitment to Saving Lives?

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A field experiment examined the tactical peacekeeping behaviors of military-officer teams undergoing training as United Nations military observers. Teams encountered a simulated human-rights violation where two civilians were being abused. Proximity of the female civilian to the team leader was manipulated and significantly influenced teams' commitment to saving the civilians' lives. Proximity increased the frequency of behaviors that were specifically oriented toward saving the civilians' lives and did not increase confrontational behavior. Finally, trainees' performance assessments were lower if they intervened but failed to save lives than if they did little to intervene and also failed to save lives.

Since the mid-twentieth century, international peacekeeping operations conducted under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) have played a vital role in strengthening prospects for state stability, security, and peace in the aftermath of war. For instance, UN peacekeeping is positively correlated with democratization after civil war, and multilateral UN operations usually succeed in ending violence (Doyle & Sambanis, 2000). From 2000 to 2005, UN deployments grew by more than 500% (Center on International Cooperation, 2007). Given the UN's consequential role in attempting to resolve international conflict, the need to better understand the conflict resolution and negotiation performance of UN peacekeepers who carry out these vital, often dangerous operations at a tactical level is significant.

Although the psychological literature on conflict resolution, mediation, and negotiation, in general, is vast (for reviews, see Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; Ross & Ward, 1995), there remains a paucity of psychological research on these topics within the peacekeeping context. Tactical military negotiations, however, differ from negotiations in other contexts in a number of important respects. As Goodwin (2005) has noted, the use of force, time pressure, and the interplay of cooperation and competition are just some of the factors that tend to be more important in military peacekeeping contexts than in other negotiation contexts. In an attempt to begin to bridge the cur-

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rent gap in knowledge, we report a field experiment that examined the conflict resolution behaviors of UN military observer (UNMO) trainees who were soon to deploy on UN peacekeeping missions abroad.

The composition of UN peacekeepers across operations as of November 30, 2007, was approximately 80% uniformed personnel, of which 85% were troops, 12% were police, and 3% were military observers (United Nations, 2007). Although UNMOs constitute the smallest group of uniformed personnel contributing to peacekeeping operations, they play a vital role and are of particular interest from the vantage point of studying tactical conflict resolution behavior in peacekeeping because, unlike their uniformed counterparts, they usually serve their tour of duty unarmed, despite having received military training emphasizing the use of kinetic force. As inductees into the ranks of peacekeepers, UNMOs must learn to act as effective mediators and negotiators in high-conflict situations that are often personally threatening. Arguably, their conflict resolution and negotiation skills will constitute their primary power base in theatre, given that they will most often be militarily overwhelmed by the parties they are attempting to de-conflict (Last, 1995). Accordingly, they provide an ideal group to study for the purpose of understanding tactical conflict resolution behavior in peacekeeping.

VICTIM PROXIMITY AND EFFORT TO INTERVENE

The power of seemingly minor situational forces to influence human behavior is a fundamental insight of social psychology (Milgram, 1974; Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Nevertheless, a systematic examination of the effect of situational factors on the tactical conflict resolution behaviors of peacekeepers has yet to be conducted. In the present field experiment, we examined the effect of one situational factor—the physical proximity of a person in need of assistance to a potential helper—on the degree to which UNMO teams were willing to escalate their commitment to saving victims' lives within the context of a human rights violation investigation. Research has shown that bystanders are more likely to intervene and offer help to a person in need of assistance when the latter is in relatively closer physical proximity. This proximity effect has been observed both in studies where participants were asked to imagine how they might behave in such situations (e.g., Gillis & Hagan, 1983) and in studies involving actual behavior. For example, in one study by Baron and Bell (1976; see also Baron, 1978), help requesters who were near the person they requested help from elicited significantly more hours of volunteer time and were perceived as being in greater need of assistance than distant requesters. Residential proximity also increases helping behavior in disasters (Barton, 1969). Conversely, physical barriers and distance can increase bystanders' psychological distance from victims (Latané, 1981) and have been implicated in notorious failures to offer help in life-or-death cases (Latané & Darley, 1970) as well as increased willingness of soldiers to kill (Grossman, 1995).

Although previous research has demonstrated that physical proximity increases helping, it has examined the effect of physical proximity neither on professionals' conflict resolution behaviors nor on the behavior of teams. Thus, it is unclear whether situational determinants, such as physical proximity to a help requester, would also affect the performance of professionals such as military peacekeepers who have mandated roles that are likely to constrain their behavioral options and who normally operate in teams. As Last (1995) noted, the mandate of UN peacekeepers at a tactical level is often highly ambiguous. On one hand, the imperative of re-

maining impartial may reinforce an observer rather than intervener role. On the other hand, when there is a great imbalance of violent aggression between parties, as in many cases involving human rights violation, UN peacekeepers have also felt the moral imperative to protect the vulnerable even if it compromises impartiality (e.g., see Barnett, 2002, 2003; Nardin, 2003). Indeed, the concept of "responsibility to protect" that is emerging in international relations reflects this moral, humanitarian mandate (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, 2001). Such commitment to helping those in dire need would seem to echo earlier work showing that individual differences in helping are in large measure attributable to personal values and perceived moral obligations (e.g., Schwartz, 1973). Thus, the extent to which peacekeepers who witness a one-sided or highly asymmetric perpetration of violence attempt to intervene to save the victims may depend on whether they perceive themselves as primarily being in the role of observer or intervener. Indeed, previous research has highlighted the importance of social roles (e.g., Callero, 1985; Callero, Howard, & Piliavin, 1987) and the social structural context of helping (e.g., Gergen & Gergen, 1983) in defining what constitutes appropriate forms of helping behavior.

In the present research, we defined intervention intensity in terms of three levels: (a) *low intensity*: teams observe a simulated human rights violation incident but do not persistently negotiate to ensure victim safety, (b) *intermediate intensity*: teams persistently negotiate until the aggressors move the victims into a zone of substantially increased risk to the team members, (c) *high intensity*: teams persistently negotiate until the end of the exercise even though they put themselves at great risk. We hypothesized that teams in near condition would exhibit higher levels of intervention intensity than teams in the far condition. In particular, we predicted that the proportion of teams exhibiting low intervention intensity would be significantly lower in the near condition than in the far condition. We also hypothesized that team leaders would be less likely to perceive a conflict in roles when the victim was near rather than far.

Previous studies have tended to narrowly constrain the manner in which the participant's behavior was coded as an instance of helping (e.g., see Latané & Darley, 1970). In contrast, we wanted to examine the *type* of assistance to the victims that UNMO team members might be willing to offer. For instance, would victim proximity increase the frequency of confrontational behaviors, nonconfrontational behaviors, or both types of behavior? We hypothesized that teams encountering a near victim would engage more frequently in the following specific nonconfrontational behaviors geared toward intervention on behalf of victims: (a) inquiring about the reasons for victimization, (b) requesting that victimization stop, and (c) initiating direct communication with victims. In contrast, we expected that proximity would not increase the expression of confrontational behavior, which we predicted would generally be rare. Confrontation, we reasoned, would be unlikely to be perceived by team members as an effective way to intervene on victims' behalf in the present study (as in most real missions) because only the aggressors were armed. Indeed, even in more benign contexts, confrontation may impede negotiation success by amplifying the intransigence of the other party (Barry & Shapiro, 1992; Ohbuchi, Chiba, & Fukushima, 1996). Thus, we expected proximity to influence intervention intensity through nonconfrontational means under the circumstances.

We also sought to examine how victim proximity might influence verbal communication within teams. Here, our examination was largely exploratory, yet we were guided by the following questions: Would proximity influence the level of communication among team members? Would the level of communication among team members vary as a function of their level of intervention

intensity? Would communication among team members be initiated primarily by the team leader or by subordinate members?

PERCEIVED PERFORMANCE EFFECTIVENESS

A second aim of this research was to examine the effect of teams' behavior in light of the outcomes they produced on team members' perceptions of their individual and team performance effectiveness. Most studies of helping behavior have focused on laypersons' responses to a single-instance request for help (e.g., being asked for a dime by a stranger; for an overview, see Latané & Darley, 1970). However, peacekeepers are likely to encounter similar types of assistance requests on repeated occasions within and across peacekeeping operations. How they respond to requests and the results these responses yield will, therefore, become part of the "lessons learned" that will likely shape their behavior and perhaps even their professional role identity in the future. In the present research, outcomes depended on the level of intervention intensity the teams displayed. Specifically, if the level displayed was low or intermediate, the victims were killed. If the level was high, the victims were alive at the end of the simulation.[1] Our central hypothesis was that perceived performance effectiveness would vary as a quadratic function of intervention intensity, such that members in intermediate intensity teams would perceive their performance effectiveness to be lower than members of teams at either extreme.

The prediction that members of high-intensity teams would perceive their performance effectiveness to be greater than their counterparts in intermediate intensity teams is intuitive. Members in both of these groups expended considerable effort and showed sustained commitment to saving the victims, but whereas the victims in the high-intensity cases lived, in the intermediate cases the victims were killed. Members of high-intensity teams could therefore claim an interventionist victory, which was denied to other team members.

Our prediction that members of low-intensity teams would also perceive their performance effectiveness to be greater than their counterparts in intermediate-intensity teams is less intuitive, given that both types of teams' behavior resulted in the same negative outcome. We entertained two motivational explanations for our prediction. First, given the differing nature of their commitment, the two types of teams had quite different options for sense making in retrospect (e.g., Staw, 1982; Weick, 1995). Members of low-intensity teams, who had gathered information that could be used for reporting but did not display a sustained effort to intervene on behalf of the victims, would likely have had an easier time constructing a favorable account of their performance in which, despite the unfortunate loss of life, they accomplished their mission of documenting the situation. Given the interventionist commitment exhibited by members of intermediate intensity teams, such an account would be less plausible and, hence, less probable as a basis for sense making. Accordingly, we tested the hypothesis that members of low-intensity teams would regard interventionism as less consistent with their observer mandate than members of intermediate-intensity teams. Alternatively, and recalling Sykes and Matza's (1957) techniques of neutralization, members of low-intensity teams might claim that they had construed the actions of the alleged perpetrators in more benign terms than members in the intermediate-intensity teams. The aggressors

[1]This aspect of design was constrained in this manner by the military training organization and not subject to modification by the research team.

in the present simulation were armed police officers who claimed to be "just following their superior's orders" of interrogating two "terrorists." Accordingly, we tested the hypothesis that members of low-intensity teams would report more benign characterizations of the police officers' behavior than members of intermediate-intensity teams.

METHOD

Sample

The participants were 50 male and 2 female military personnel undergoing UNMO predeployment training at a North American military base, which constituted the entire set of enrolled trainees in that training cycle. Age was distributed as follows: 4 were 21 to 30 years, 16 were 31 to 40 years, 26 were 41 to 50 years, and 6 were 51 to 60 years of age. Among the sample, 88% were married, 75% were North American, and 63% had a college or university degree. The sample consisted of 8 noncommissioned members, 24 junior officers, and 20 senior officers. Seventy-seven percent had served more than 15 years in the military. Forty-seven percent were from the Army, 31% from the Air Force, and 22% from the Navy.

Procedure

The human rights violation exercise that provided the situational context for our field experiment was one in a series of five exercises that trainees completed in a one-day practical UNMO training course. Before starting the course, trainees were told that the experimenters' aim was to learn more about factors that influence decision making in an operational context, although the specifics of the exercise were not discussed. Each exercise took place at a different location on the training grounds, and there were two nonoverlapping training grounds on the military base. Schematics of these locations are shown in Figure 1. Reconnaissance surveys of the locations were used to plot distances between critical points within each location, ensuring that their critical aspects were comparable. The order in which the teams, traveling on foot, completed the exercises was counterbalanced using a Latin-square design by the military training organization.

Trainers grouped the trainees into 19 teams, 5 of which comprised two members and 14 of which comprised three members. Each team had a randomly selected leader. Trainees were informed that, with their consent, their behaviors at the unnamed target exercise would be videotaped and analyzed for research purposes. Although there were 19 sessions, videos from only 17 sessions (9 in the near condition and 8 in the far condition) were available for video analysis because two groups included at least one member who did not consent to videotaping. However, all trainees consented to completing the questionnaire, thus allowing us to analyze observational and questionnaire data from all 19 teams.

The exercise unfolded in a clearing (see Figure 1). Personnel from the military base played the roles of the two civilians (one male and one female) and the two military police (MPs)—one Sergeant (Sgt) in command of the situation and one constable. The Sgt negotiated with the trainees and prevented contact between the trainees and the civilians. The constable guarded the civilians and abused them verbally and physically throughout the exercise. Of course, the abuse was staged and the civilian role players were in fact unharmed. The MPs wore military police uniforms and

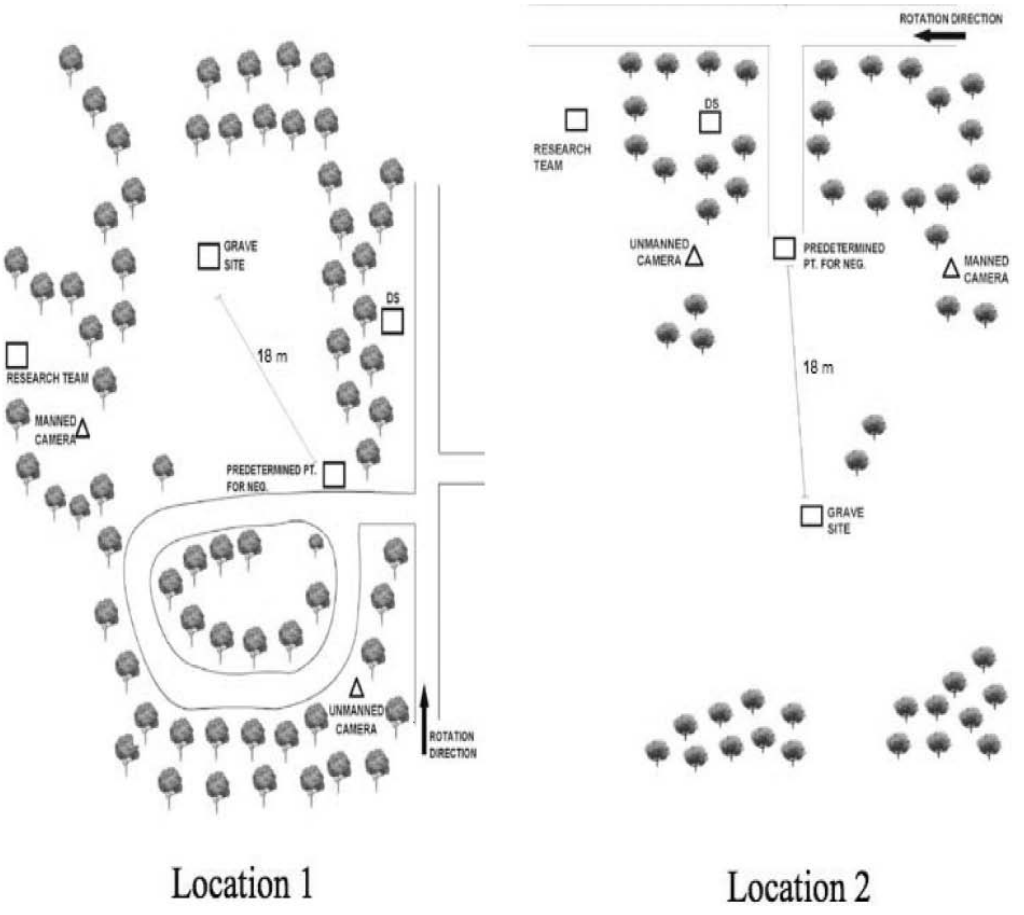

FIGURE 1 Schematics of human rights violation exercise locations. Note that "Predetermined pt. for neg" stands for predetermined point where negotiation occurred and "DS" stands for directing staff (i.e., the military trainers who supervised the stand).

carried light machine guns. Figure 2 shows a picture of the constable threatening the civilians, as the latter are forced at gunpoint to dig what appeared to be their own graves.

Role players, who were blind to the hypotheses tested in this study, were briefed about the exercise requirements by the training staff. After this briefing, the experimenters administered a script to the role players that described the exercise and their roles in it in detail. This was followed by rehearsals during which the research team made adjustments to ensure that the actors were enacting their roles properly. The exercise began when the female civilian ran out to the road in full view of the trainees as they were walking toward their assigned destination. The woman screamed for help and was being pursued by the constable. This occurred about 100 m ahead of the trainees' location. The trainees had already received situation reports warning of potential human rights violations in the region, including the possible killing and intimidation of civilians. The constable grabbed the woman and dragged her to the back of the clearing where she joined a male civilian.

FIGURE 2 Actors playing the roles of constable and civilians at Location 1.

The civilians were forced to dig what appeared to be their own graves, which were demarcated by headstones for clarity.

Negotiations between the trainees and the Sgt occurred at a predetermined point established by the experimenters, which was 18 m from the apparent gravesite. It was marked by a broken tree branch so that it would not be detected by trainees. Teams that were hesitant to enter the clearing were drawn to the predetermined negotiation point by the Sgt, by telling the trainees to approach him if they wished to talk. The Sgt informed the trainees that the situation was "regular police business" and that the UN team should leave the scene. The Sgt explained that the two civilians were "terrorists" and that the constable was using intimidation techniques merely to interrogate them. If the trainees asked whether the MPs had the authority to conduct such "interrogations," the Sgt assured them that he was acting under orders of his commanding officer and that they should go to the police station in the nearby village if they had any further questions. Meanwhile, the civilians shouted pleas to the team members, insisting that they were innocent and that the MPs were going to kill them.

Experimental Manipulation

We manipulated proximity between teams by randomly assigning them to the near and far conditions.[2] In the near condition, about 5 min after the start of the exercise the female victim escaped

[2]Proximity was independent of team size, $\chi 2(1, N = 19) = 0.15$, *ns*. There were seven three-member teams in each condition.

from the constable and ran toward the point where the Sgt was talking with the team leader. While she was running, she shouted, "Please, help me!" The constable pursued her and caught her at approximately 1 m from the Sgt, and he began struggling with her in an attempt to pull her back to the gravesite. At this point, she attempted to make direct eye contact with the team leader and shouted, "Help me! Why aren't you helping me? You're supposed to help me! Please, help me!" five times in succession and in a tone of fearful desperation. The Sgt was scripted to tell the trainees to "Please stay back. She's a terrorist. She's very dangerous." After making this contact with the UNMO team, the woman was pulled back to the gravesite by the constable. On her way back, she shouted, "Please, help me!" In contrast, in the far condition and also approximately 5 min after the start of the scenario the victim turned toward the location where the Sgt and trainees were standing and shouted the same message five times in succession in the same tone of fearful desperation.[3] The Sgt repeated the same script as in the near condition. This procedure was undertaken to ensure that, while the direct pleas for help were made, the only substantive difference between the near and far conditions was the physical distance between the female victim and the team leader. Given that the distance from the gravesite to the negotiation point was 18 m (see Figure 1), the lead negotiator was 18 m from the female civilian in the far condition and 1 m from her in the near condition. Our decision to use the female as opposed to the male civilian for implementing our proximity manipulation owed primarily to the fact that she was likely to be the more salient of the two agents, having been the one who effectively initiated the start of the scenario through her behavior (namely, her cries for help and her attempt to run away at the start of the scenario).

Dependent Measures

In situ, at least two members of the research team coded for three levels of intervention intensity: Low-intensity teams observed the situation and left after a period of information seeking, following which the victims were immediately taken into the woods by the MPs and shot. Intermediate intensity teams stayed and negotiated until the Sgt who, under instruction from the trainer via microphone, broke off the negotiation and with the help of the constable led the victims into the woods, where they were shot. High-intensity teams further decided to follow the MPs and victims into the woods, which the trainees had been told were full of mines, in which case the scenario ended with the victims staying alive. After one of these outcomes occurred, the trainer ended the scenario and videotaping stopped.[4] Unsurprisingly, given the distinctness of the three levels of response, there was perfect agreement among coders on assessments of intervention intensity. In turn, coders' assessments agreed perfectly with the trainers' assessments.

After the exercise ended, we administered a questionnaire to the trainees. The questions of interest for this research focused on (a) how much their mandate prevented them from helping the civilians (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *completely*), (b) the extent to which the MPs were just following orders (1 = *far beyond orders*, 9 = *completely in line*), (c) how they would rate the overall quality of their response to the scenario (1 = *worst possible*, 9 = *best possible*), (d) how well their team responded

[3]On average, the intervention began 4.9 min (SD = 0.5) after the start of the scenario in the far condition, and 5.2 min (SD = 0.9) after the start of the scenario in the near condition, $t(15) = 1.31$, *ns*. In addition, on average, the duration of the intervention was 15.1 s (SD = 8.3) in the near condition, and 16.5 s (SD = 13.8) in the far condition, $t(15) = 0.28$, *ns*.

[4]On average, the scenario ended 8.3 min (SD = 4.1) after the end of the proximity manipulation in the far condition, and 8.3 min (SD = 5.1) after the end of that manipulation in the near condition, $t(15) = 0.03$, *ns*.

compared to likely performance of other teams (1 = *much worse*, 9 = *much better*), and (e) how they would rate the overall quality of the outcome of the scenario (1 = *worst possible*, 9 = *best possible*). Although all participants signed the consent form for completing the questionnaire, six participants did not complete the measures. Trainees were debriefed about the purpose of the study at the end of the training day.

Audiovisual Data Capture and Coding

The cameras used for video data collection were hidden in the bushes (see Figure 1). Although camera positions varied between the two locations, they had similar perspectives and depth of field. One camera, which was operated by a member of the research team, was positioned to film the negotiation between the team leader and the negotiating MP (Sgt). The second camera, which was set to run continuously, was positioned to capture the victims from the perspective of the trainees. A microphone mounted on the Sgt was synchronized with the video-camera capture.

After the data were collected, a member of the research team watched the videotapes and coded the frequency of four behavioral categories at the team level: (a) inquiring about the alleged infraction by civilians; (b) requests for the MPs to stop abusing the civilians; (c) initiating verbal contact or attempting to make physical contact with the civilians; and (d) confrontational behaviors, such as provoking, annoying, or attempting to circumvent the Sgt's authority. Frequency was operationally defined as the number of distinct temporal segments of a given behavioral category over the scenario. The coder, moreover, coded only the primary behavior exhibited at any particular time. The coding was done by having a timeline run along the video into which the coder could "punch" blocks of time associated with a particular coding category or with a "none of the above" category. To test interrater reliability, a second coder coded a random selection of three videos and determined the percentage agreement in time over the total length of the scenario. The percentages for the three dual-coded scenarios were 83%, 76%, and 76%, indicating good interrater reliability.

To assess communication among team members, two coders coded the start and stop times of team communications in seconds, coding whether the communication was initiated by the team leader or a subordinate member. The interrater reliability between the coders was high, with a correlation of .84 for the subordinate-initiated communications and .62 for the leader-initiated communications. Accordingly, the durations analyzed were based on an average of those provided by the two coders. For the purposes of analysis, the durations of communication were summed for the two, consecutive 5-min intervals from the start of the scenario. These intervals correspond closely to the period of communication before the proximity manipulation and the first 5 min after the manipulation.

RESULTS[5]

Effect of Proximity on Intervention Intensity

We hypothesized that victim proximity would influence intervention intensity such that teams' commitment to saving the victims would be greater in the near condition than in the far condition.

[5]All inferential statistics reported are for tests of directional hypotheses. Accordingly, we use an alpha level equal to .05 for one-tailed tests as our criterion for statistical significance in subsequent analyses.

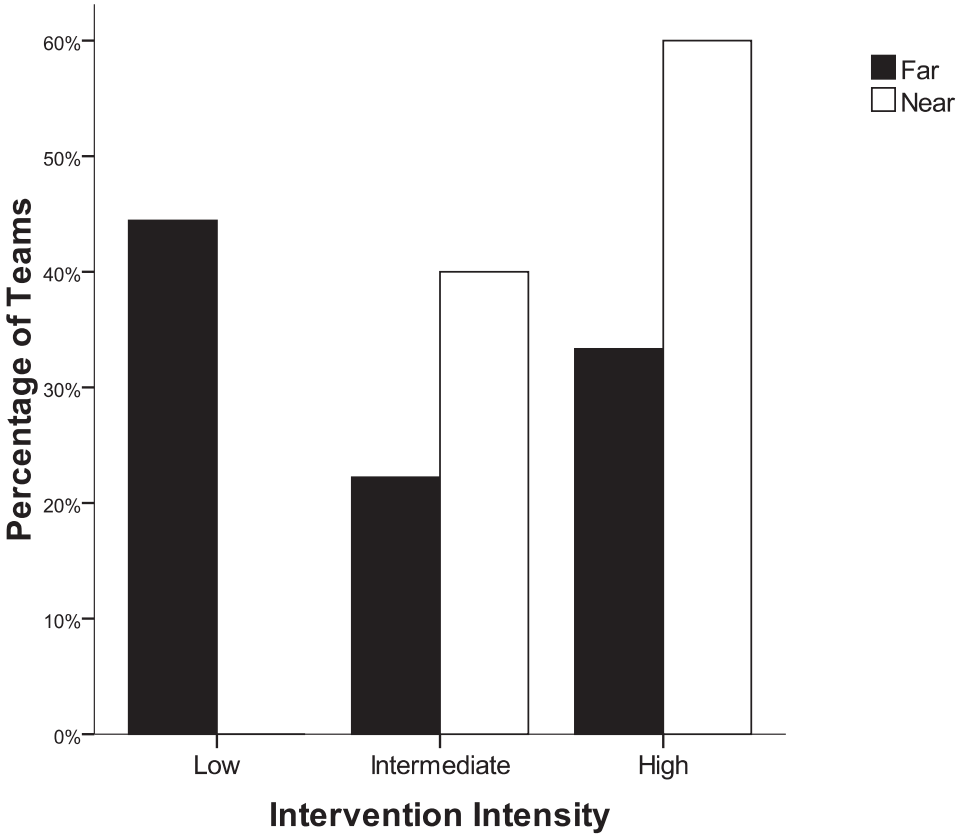

FIGURE 3 Percentage of teams as a function of intervention intensity and proximity.

Figure 3 shows that this hypothesis was strongly supported. Whereas 4 out of 9 teams (44.44%) in the far condition disengaged from the situation and left the civilians in the sole custody of the MPs, not one of the 10 teams in the near condition chose this course of action. The effect of proximity on intervention intensity was significant, Mann-Whitney $U = 25.00$, $p < .05$, $r = .41$.[6] Following conventional standards (Cohen, 1988), this constitutes a moderate to large statistical effect. Proximity also had a significant effect on leaders' perceived mandate. As predicted, leaders in the near condition ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 2.44$) were significantly less likely to view their mandate as constraining an interventionist goal of helping the victims than leaders in the far condition ($M = 6.22$, $SD = 2.22$), $t(15) = 2.63$, $p < .05$, $d = –1.26$.

To examine the effect of proximity on specific team behaviors, we calculated the change in frequency by subtracting the frequency of each type of behavior exhibited before the proximity manipulation from the frequency exhibited after the manipulation ended. In Table 1, these scores are shown as a function of proximity, along with the *t*-test values, significance levels, and effect size

[6] r (= $z/\sqrt{n}$) is a nonparametric effect-size estimator for the Mann-Whitney U statistic (Field, 2005).

TABLE 1
Change in Frequency (After – Before) of Behaviors as a Function of Proximity

	Proximity					
	Far		*Near*			
Behavior	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*t(15)*	*d*
Inquiry about civilians	–0.50	1.20	0.78	1.20	2.19*	1.13
Request to stop abuse	–0.13	1.13	1.44	1.59	2.32*	1.20
Contacting civilians	2.00	3.51	3.78	4.08	0.96	0.50
Confrontation	3.38	4.60	4.89	7.66	0.49	0.25

Note. Statistics are based on data from 17 teams.
*$p < .05$.

estimates for the difference between the near and far condition. As predicted, compared to teams in the far condition, teams in the near condition showed a significantly greater increase in frequency of inquiries to the MPs about the civilians' alleged crimes as well as a significantly greater increase in frequency of requests to stop the civilian abuse. Both of those effects were very large by conventional standards (Cohen, 1988). The difference in change scores was in the predicted direction for the "contacting civilians" category, but it did not reach significance. Nevertheless, the difference even in this case was of a moderate effect size. Finally, as predicted, there was no significant change in the frequency of confrontational behaviors as a function of proximity and the effect size estimate was small.

Finally, we conducted a four-way, mixed-model analysis of variance on communication durations to examine how the duration of team communications varied as a function of proximity, intervention intensity, initiator of communication (i.e., leader or subordinate), and time interval (i.e., 0–5 min or 5–10 min). The analysis revealed significant main effects of proximity, $F(1, 12) = 17.33$, $p < .01$, $\eta_p^2 = .59$; intervention intensity, $F(2, 12) = 4.16$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .41$; and time interval, $F(1, 12) = 8.61$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .42$, which were qualified by significant interaction effects of time interval × proximity, $F(1, 12) = 9.16$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .43$; and initiator × proximity × intervention intensity, $F(1, 12) = 6.01$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .33$. As Figure 4 shows, near and far teams displayed similar durations of communication in the first 5 min, $t(15) = 0.97$, *ns*, but far teams communicated for longer durations than near teams in the 5- to 10-min interval, $t(15) = 2.38$, $p < .05$. Figure 5 plots the significant three-way interaction. Verbal communication among team members in the near condition was virtually nonexistent. In the far condition, however, communication varied as a function of initiator and intervention intensity. Leader-initiated communication occurred mainly in the intermediate condition, whereas subordinate-initiated communication increased monotonically from low to high intensity.

Perceived Performance Effectiveness

Table 2 shows trainees' mean ratings of personal performance effectiveness, their team's relative performance effectiveness, and outcome quality as a function of the level of intervention intensity exhibited by their respective teams. These three conceptually related measures showed good scale

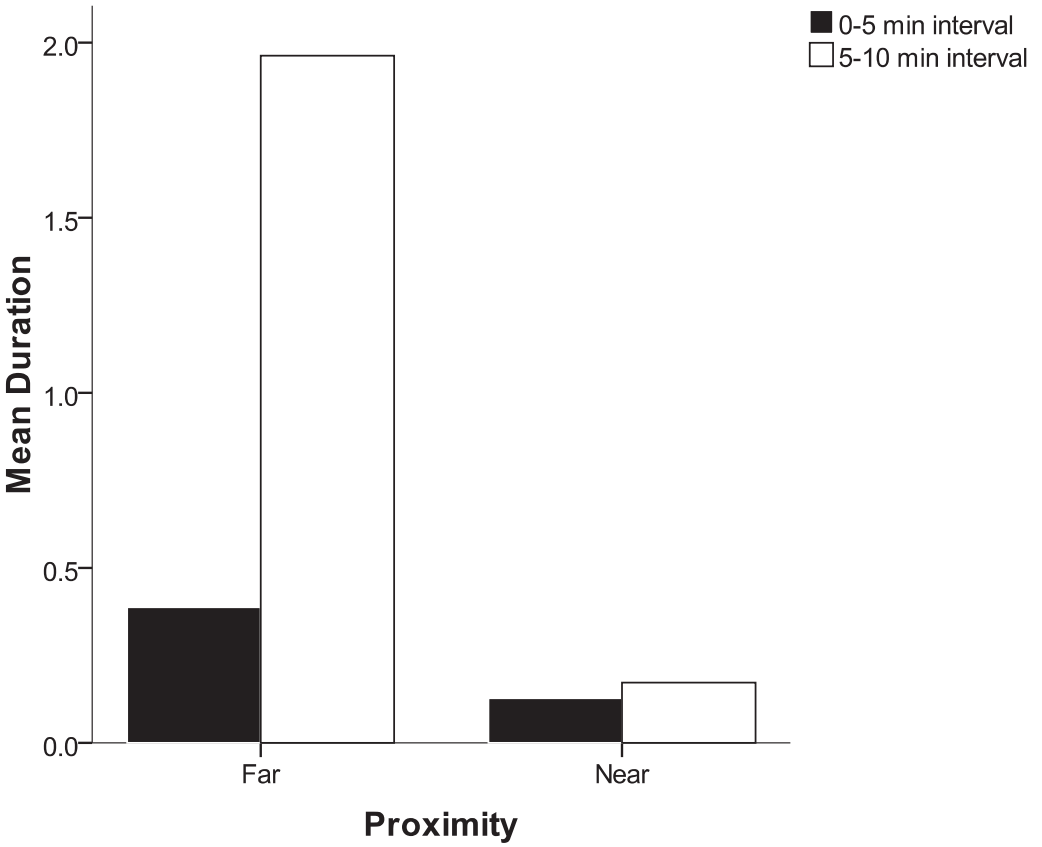

FIGURE 4 Mean duration of team communication as a function of proximity and time interval.

reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$) and were averaged to yield a single perceived performance effectiveness scale. Perceived performance effectiveness did not differ as a function of proximity, $t(44) = 0.22$, *ns* (and we did not predict that it would). However, perceived performance effectiveness significantly differed as a function of intervention intensity, $F(2, 43) = 5.51$, $p < .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$. As we had predicted, Fisher Least Significant Difference post hoc tests revealed that perceived effectiveness was lower in intermediate intensity teams than in either low ($p < .05$) or high ($p < .005$) intensity teams (the latter two types of teams did not significantly differ).

We examined whether low and intermediate intensity team members systematically differed in the degree to which they perceived their mandate as constraining an interventionist agenda and the degree to which the MPs were perceived as "just following orders." Contrary to the first motivational account we tested, members from low and intermediate intensity teams did not significantly differ in terms of the extent to which they regarded their mandate as constraining interventionism, $t(23) = 1.12$, *ns*. However, in support of the second account, members of low-intensity teams ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 2.58$) agreed significantly more that the MPs were just following orders than members of intermediate intensity teams ($M = 2.64$, $SD = 1.99$), $t(24) = 1.98$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.76$.

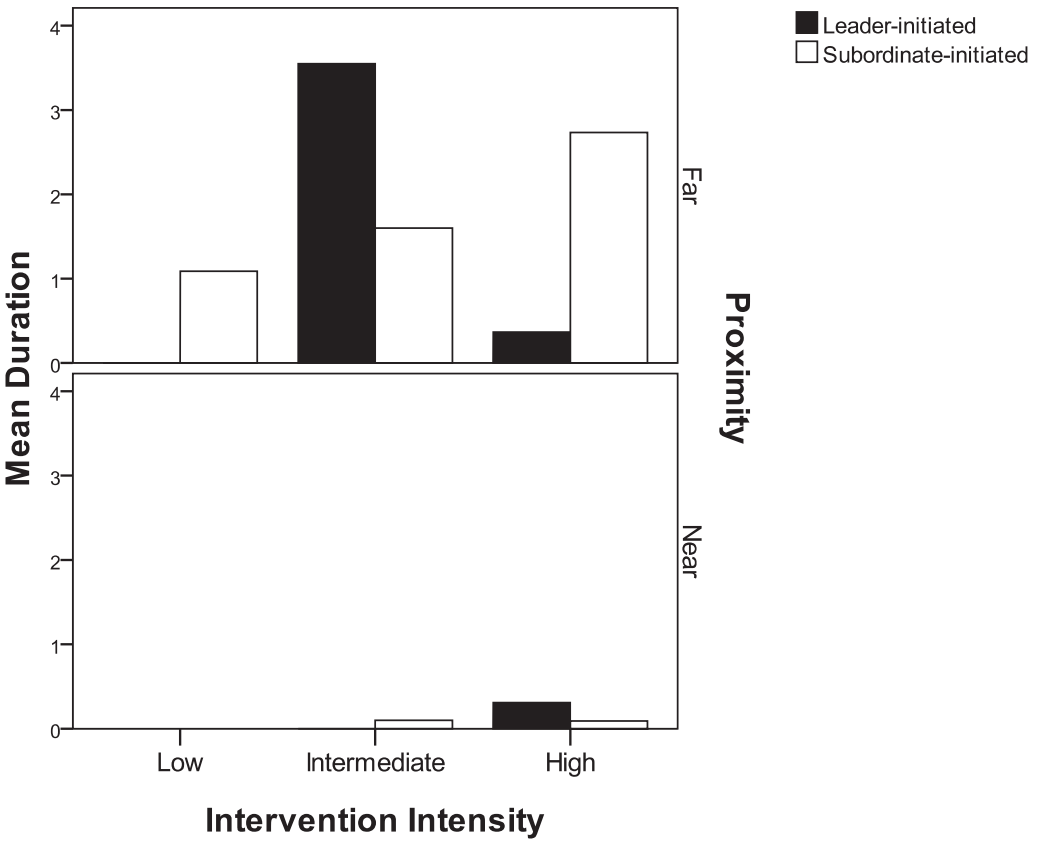

FIGURE 5 Mean duration of team communication as a function of initiator, proximity, and intervention intensity.

TABLE 2
Perceived Effectiveness as a Function of Intervention Intensity

	Intervention Intensity					
	Low		*Intermediate*		*High*	
Measure	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Own response	6.33	1.56	4.83	1.95	6.00	1.86
Team response	5.17	1.12	4.67	0.89	5.74	1.66
Outcome	5.25	3.02	2.50	2.15	5.68	2.66
Effectiveness scale	5.58	1.45	4.00	1.44	5.83	1.70

Note. Statistics are based on data from 46 participants.

DISCUSSION

Proximity and Intervention Intensity

To our knowledge, the present research provides the first experimental demonstration of an effect of a help requester's physical proximity on *teams* of potential help givers. Our proximity manipulation, fleeting as it was in duration (a mere 15 s on average), had a powerful effect on UNMO teams' ultimate behavioral response. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Baron, 1978; Baron & Bell, 1976; Gillis & Hagan, 1983), we found that an increase in proximity escalated teams' behavioral commitment to saving the civilians. That effect was impressive both in terms of statistical magnitude and its practical significance, which in our view vividly demonstrates the principle that situational forces, fortuitous or otherwise, may exact considerable influence over individual and group behaviors that, according to naïve intuition, ought to be under the control of one's "will and reason" (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). The effects of proximity on teams' behavior that we observed were neither anticipated by the military course trainers before the exercise nor regarded by them as obvious in hindsight.

When the female victim approached the lead team member, not 1 team out of 10 opted to leave the civilians to fend for themselves. In stark contrast, when proximity was low, 4 of the 9 teams—namely, about half of the teams in that condition—did just that. The variability in team responses is striking, given that all trainees had previously undergone the same course training on negotiation tactics. We believe that the observed range of response underscores Last's (1995) contention that peacekeeping objectives at the tactical level are often unclear, thus leaving peacekeepers with seeming discretion in how to appropriately respond to human rights violations. Indeed, our finding that proximity had an effect not only on intervention intensity but also on the degree to which interventionism was viewed as conflicting with one's mandate supports this assertion. Leaders confronted with the near female victim were less likely than those confronted with the far female victim to see interventionism as conflicting with their observer mandate. That such a fleeting manipulation could influence both actual behavior and the perceived boundaries of leader's perceived peacekeeping roles is remarkable. Indeed, this demonstration in the peacekeeping context raises questions of whether similar findings might be replicated in other professional groups that intervene on behalf of victims, such as police officers, firefighters, or emergency response workers. In each of these cases, the professionals have a perceived mandate (that may be more or less aligned with their organization's actual mandate), they tend to operate in small teams, and they have the potential to offer assistance to those in need.

The present findings also shed light on the specific types of behavior that were influenced by proximity. As noted earlier, past experiments designed to examine the effect of proximity on helping behavior have tended to operationalize helping in terms of the probability that participants will engage in a particular type of behavior or the rapidity with which they would do so. In contrast, participants in the present research were relatively unconstrained in terms of their behavioral options. We found that, compared to teams in the far condition, teams in the near condition showed a more positive increase from pre- to postmanipulation in the frequency of behaviors that focused on assisting the victims—namely, requesting that the MPs refrain from abusing the civilians and asking the MPs to clarify the nature of the civilians' alleged crimes. In contrast, and despite the fact that the "moral intensity" (Jones, 1991) of the human rights violations may have seemed even greater in the near condition, we did not observe a concomitant increase in confrontational behav-

iors. As noted earlier, confrontation would likely constitute an unsuccessful tactic in such situations, given that UN peacekeepers are often not well prepared to respond with kinetic force should such confrontation escalate. Accordingly, the absence of an effect in this regard reflects positively on the teams' performance and the effectiveness of the training. For the most part, trainees displayed patience and restraint in their interactions with the MPs, in line with what most peace operations guidelines advocate (e.g., see United States, 2004).

Our findings also shed light on the communications among team members. Generally speaking, teams exhibited little communication among members—under a minute for all teams. The proximity × time-interval interaction effect indicates that victim proximity has the effect of attenuating team communications. This may be due in part to the salience of the victim in the near condition and partly to an increase in team leaders' communications with the lead MP, as efforts to save the victims were stepped up. The findings of our communication analysis also revealed that at the extremes of team response—namely, low- and high-intervention intensity—leaders initiated almost no communication with their team members. By contrast, subordinates in the far condition increased the level of communication as intervention intensity increased.

Perceived Performance Effectiveness

Our research also revealed several noteworthy findings regarding peacekeeping trainees' perceptions of their performance effectiveness. As we hypothesized, perceived performance effectiveness varied as a function of the nexus between teams' intervention intensity and the outcome derived from their overall response. Unsurprisingly, perhaps, we found that among the teams that exhibited a significant commitment to interventionism (i.e., the intermediate- and high-intensity teams), those that ended the scenario with the civilians staying alive felt significantly better about their performance than those that ended the scenario with the civilians having been shot. It is clear, however, that perceptions of performance effectiveness were not a simple function of outcome. Teams that displayed low-intervention intensity (and where the civilians were shot) did not significantly differ in perceived performance effectiveness from those that displayed high-intervention intensity. Moreover, low-intensity team members felt significantly better about their performance than their intermediate-intensity team counterparts even though the same negative outcome befell the civilians in both cases.

We had offered two explanations of why that might be the case. Our first explanation that members of low-intensity teams might attempt to justify their early departure from the scene by claiming that interventionism was inconsistent with their UN observer mandate was not supported. We found no difference between members of low- and intermediate-intensity teams in terms of this measure. However, our second explanation that members of low-intensity teams would be more likely to construe the actions of the aggressors as being in line with their mandate of interrogating the civilians than members of intermediate-intensity teams was supported. Compared to members of intermediate-intensity teams, members of low-intensity teams were more apt to regard the MPs as just following their superiors' orders.

Although we cannot rule out the possibility that such perceptions of the MPs influenced the degree to which teams exhibited interventionism, we suspect that the observed differences in reported construals also reflect the sense-making options available in retrospect (Weick, 1995). By claiming that they believed that the MPs were just fulfilling their duty, low-intensity team members could justify their lack of interventionism. After all, why would they be expected to intervene

if the police were behaving normally? In contrast, members of intermediate-intensity teams could not easily claim this sort of ego-protective sense-making account given that they had already shown a clear interventionist commitment. Doing so would have made them appear inconsistent, if not insincere. Indeed, the relatively poor perceived performance effectiveness of intermediate intensity team members may also have been due to the fact that their commitment exhibited less consistency than members of the other teams. In effect, they committed themselves to interventionism but then stopped short when the personal risks were ratcheted up. Research has shown that a norm of consistency underlies perceived performance effectiveness, especially when staying the course results in a positive outcome (Staw & Ross, 1980), as the high-intensity teams experienced.

It would be unfortunate if the lessons that members of intermediate intensity teams learned was that they should either have gone all the way or else not have bothered at all because, arguably, those teams adopted the best course of action. They accepted a measured degree of risk in order to try to save victims of human rights violations but stopped short of putting themselves in an extremely high-risk situation—in effect, steering the best course between Scylla and Charybdis. Although trainers routinely tell trainees in their debriefing sessions that there are no right or wrong decisions and that they will only have so much control over the situation, our findings indicate that members of teams who tried interventionism and failed nevertheless left feeling relatively worse about their performance than their counterparts in other teams.

Future research could examine how such experiences impact learning and subsequent behavior in situations that require conflict resolution on the part of peacekeepers. Quite conceivably, such findings could be fed back to trainers so that such courses do not inadvertently communicate the wrong message. In our own research, the findings were briefed to the training staff, and they had the opportunity to discuss with us the implications of the findings for improving training. That process was viewed as a positive one by trainers. In particular, the effect of our experimental manipulation of proximity sensitized them to the effect that slight situational variations in their role-playing scenarios could have on the behavioral dynamics among actors. Our findings also highlighted the fact that the manner in which trainers make outcomes contingent on trainees' behaviors could importantly shape the lessons that trainees draw from their training experience.

Potential Limitations

Field experiments, such as the present one, offer the benefit of examining the effect of variables of interest on behavior in contexts that are atypically high in terms of their external and ecological validities. We are equally well aware; however, they also often endure threats to internal validity and impose constraints on the methodological design that researchers might not have otherwise chosen to impose. In the present research, we did not have control over a number of factors that we would have liked to control. For example, as we noted earlier, the relation between intervention intensity and the outcome of the scenario was a contingency set by the trainers' protocol. Nor did we have the option of choosing our sample size based on a power calculation. We were instead restricted to the relatively small number of teams available. As well, although we would have liked to have more time to probe participants after the exercise, the option to do so was not available. As noted, most of our participants were soon to deploy on peacekeeping missions and were on a very tight schedule. Despite these limitations, we believe that applied experimental research such as the present field experiment has the potential to improve training procedures that aim to foster peacekeepers' performance effectiveness at a tactical level while minimizing unnecessary risks.

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